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Katzenbach Finds State Department Bureaucracy

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an Impediment to Reform

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 11—A

year ago, President Johnson named Attorney General Nicholas deBelleville Katzenbach to the important, but lower ranking, position of Under Secretary of State.

Mr. Katzenbach believed then that he had a Presidential mandate for two tasks—to restore the department's "primacy" among the Government agencies operating overseas, and to improve its prickly relationship with Congress.

Now, a year later, there is not much sign that Mr. Katzenbach has won the active support of Secretary of State Dean Rusk in establishing "primacy," or that he has had much impact on Congress.

An official who admires him said:

"I'm disappointed in Nick. He's got the brains and prestige, but for the life of me I can't figure out what he's doing."

'A Mental Retreat'

From time to time now, his friends find Mr. Katzenbach depressed, or, as one put it, "in a mental retreat." Yet, at other times, he seems serene, imperturbable and as ironically witty as ever.

"I'm not sure I see much correlation between what I do here and how the State Department runs," he wryly told a visitor six months after he had taken his oath. Not long after that, he began a luncheon speech to foreign affairs writers by saying:

"If any of you gentlemen learn anything in the next 30 minutes I'd be grateful if you'd tell me later what it was."

"Nick Katzenbach was successful and happy at Justice," a close friend said. "The lines of command ran up and down and he was the boss. At State his authority is diffuse, and everyone seems to be drinking everyone else's bath water."

Moreover, Mr. Katzenbach appears to have ruffled tensions in his first major testimony as Under Secretary of State before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on August 17.

His vociferous, finger-pointing defense of President Johnson's Vietnam war powers under the Tonkin Bay resolution annoyed both hawks and doves.



Associated Press

Nicholas deB. Katzenbach before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee last August. He discussed foreign affairs.

A poll of eight committee members soon afterward elicited comments about his appearance such as "nervously uncertain," "dogmatic" and "acrimonious."

The incident, which was widely discussed here, lent credence to the belief that the normally placid Mr. Katzenbach was becoming increasingly frustrated in the Department of State.

Nonetheless, Mr. Katzenbach still seems to be plugging doggedly at the task nearest his heart: bringing order into the conduct of foreign affairs.

At least 34 Government agencies now operate overseas, and the State Department's influence over foreign operations is shrinking.

Of the 46,000 noncombat Federal personnel overseas, less than 10 per cent work for the State Department. Of every Government dollar, only 3 per cent is spent internationally for nondefense purposes, and of this the State Department's share is one-eighth.

The President's Adviser

Mr. Rusk, however, believes that the Secretary of State is more the President's adviser on foreign affairs than the executive head of a major operating agency.

His critics say this monopolizes Mr. Rusk's attention on a few key issues, while he leaves the State Department to run

They also say that Mr. Rusk's preoccupation with a few vital areas allows crises elsewhere to burst onto the President's desk without the work at lower levels that could eliminate policy differences on them among the great agencies of Government.

Much could be done to remedy this, the critics say, with modern management techniques that would make the State Department more truly the "executive agency" on foreign affairs.

Soon after his appointment

on Oct. 3, 1966, Mr. Katzenbach began to seek an assistant who could spread these techniques throughout the department.

After three months' search he chose Dr. Thomas C. Schelling, a professor of economics at Harvard. Together they pressed hard for the adoption of techniques, particularly "programming," to better organize the department's information on what other agencies were doing and thereby improve its planning and operations.

By early spring, however, resistance to Dr. Schelling and Mr. Katzenbach was rising within the department. Eventually, Idmar Rimestad, a seasoned administrative official, was named Deputy Under Secretary for Administration, the

post Mr. Katzenbach had hoped to secure for Dr. Schelling.

Many took this as a sign of Mr. Rusk's aversion to change, and shortly afterward Dr. Schelling concluded that it was time to return to Harvard.

"Tom Schelling's decision was a tough blow for Nick," said a friend of both men. "It not only knocked out eight months of effort, but the whole department knew that Nick had failed."

Mr. Katzenbach still enjoys, at least the visible backing of Mr. Rusk, who told a visitor recently that his subordinate would make "one of the great Under Secretaries of all time."

Nonetheless, Mr. Rusk's failure to support Mr. Katzenbach's reforms and his refusal to give him any clear authority appear to have handicapped his subordinate.

There is also Mr. Katzenbach's natural diffidence and his minor experience in foreign affairs.

"You've got to be a bastard in that job," said an official in another agency. "Nick isn't built that way. He's too nice a guy."

Crisis Management

Moreover, the real status symbol in Government today is "crisis management," and when crises arise most senior officials seek a role in them.

In this courtly, but ruthless, power struggle on the State Department's seventh floor, Mr. Katzenbach has been at a disadvantage.

"Nick has had bad luck ever since he came into the department," an observer said. "He was away in Africa when the Middle East crisis broke and he got back to find Mac Bundy and Gene Rostow running it for the President and the Secretary. He was in Saigon when the Congo crisis broke."

"He hasn't," he said, "really got his teeth into any of the big ones yet."

Foreign Service officers who attend Mr. Katzenbach's staff meetings say he has an unerring instinct for the political bases that must be touched around Washington before proposals become policy.

But then, they complain, he seems indecisive.

"When we've analyzed the problem and looked at all the policy angles, the meeting breaks up without any sense of direction," one said recently. "Nick never says, 'We'll go this way,' or 'We'll do that.' We just

Another, noting the casual

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